

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-21 (canceled).

Claim 22 (new): A permanently wettable superabsorbent material made by the method comprising:

treating a superabsorbent material with a surfactant in a surfactant solution;

wherein said surfactant has at least one first functional group reactive with a second functional group of said superabsorbent material and at least one non-reactive and hydrophilic functional group; and

wherein said surfactant is applied to said superabsorbent material when said second functional groups on a surface of said superabsorbent material are activated.

Claim 23 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said superabsorbent material is selected from the group consisting of fibers, particulates, films, nonwovens, beads, foams, and coforms.

Claim 24 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said surfactant solution includes a solvent to said surfactant but a non-solvent to said superabsorbent material; and

wherein said surfactant solution includes an amount of water sufficient to activate said surface of said superabsorbent material to promote reaction between said first and said second functional groups on said surface of said superabsorbent material.

Claim 25 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said superabsorbent material has a floating time less than 30 seconds.

Claim 26 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said permanently wettable superabsorbent material has a reduction in surface tension of saline less than about 30% when compared to an untreated superabsorbent material.

Claim 27 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said superabsorbent material is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal salts of polyacrylic acids, polyacrylamides, polyvinyl alcohol, ethylene maleic anhydride copolymers, polyvinyl ethers, hydroxypropylcellulose, polyvinylmorpholinone, and polymers and copolymers of vinyl sulfonic acid, polyacrylates, polyacrylamides, polyvinyl amines, polyallylamines, and polyvinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 28 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said superabsorbent material is selected from the group consisting of agar, algin, carrageenan, starch, pectin, guar gum, chitosan, and the like, modified natural materials such as carboxyalkyl cellulose, methyl cellulose, hydroxyalkyl cellulose, chitosan salt, dextran, and the like.

Claim 29 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said surfactant first reactive functional group is selected from the group consisting of quaternary ammonium groups, amino groups, carboxyl groups, sulfonate groups, phosphate groups, and their corresponding acid groups.

Claim 30 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 24 wherein said solvent is selected from the group consisting of isopropanol, methanol, ethanol, butyl alcohol, butanediol, butanetriol, butanone, acetone, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, glycerol, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 31 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 24 wherein said water is present from about 1 to 10% by total weight of the solvent.

Claim 32 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 wherein said surfactant is applied to said superabsorbent material when said surface of said superabsorbent material is sufficiently solvated to promote reaction between said first and said second functional groups on the surface of said superabsorbent material.

Claim 33 (new): A disposable absorbent product comprising a liquid-permeable topsheet, a backsheet attached to the topsheet, and an absorbent structure comprising the permanently wettable superabsorbent material of claim 22 positioned between the topsheet and the backsheet.

Claim 34 (new): A permanently wettable superabsorbent fiber made by the method comprising:

treating a superabsorbent fiber with a surfactant solution; and

binding said surfactant to a surface of said superabsorbent fiber;

wherein said surfactant comprises at least one first functional group reactive with at least a second functional group of said surface of said superabsorbent fiber, and at least one non-reactive and hydrophilic functional group on said surface of said superabsorbent fiber; and

wherein said surfactant is applied to said superabsorbent fiber when said surface is activated by increasing an amount of said at least a second functional group available to react at said surface of said superabsorbent fiber.

Claim 35 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent fiber of claim 34 having a reduction in surface tension of saline less than about 30%.

Claim 36 (new): A disposable absorbent product comprising a liquid-permeable topsheet, a backsheet attached to said topsheet, and an absorbent structure comprising the permanently wettable superabsorbent fiber of claim 34 positioned between the topsheet and the backsheet.

Claim 37 (new): A permanently wettable superabsorbent particle made by the method comprising:

treating a superabsorbent particle with a surfactant solution; and

binding said surfactant to a surface of said superabsorbent particle;

wherein said surfactant comprises at least one first functional group reactive with at least a second functional group of said surface of said superabsorbent particle, and at least one non-reactive and hydrophilic functional group on said surface of said superabsorbent particle; and

wherein said surfactant is applied to said superabsorbent particle when said surface is activated by increasing an amount of said at least a second functional group available to react at said surface of said superabsorbent particle.

Claim 38 (new): The permanently wettable superabsorbent particle of claim 37 having a reduction in surface tension of saline less than about 30%.

Claim 39 (new): A disposable absorbent product comprising a liquid-permeable topsheet, a backsheet attached to said topsheet, and an absorbent structure comprising the permanently wettable superabsorbent particle of claim 37 positioned between the topsheet and the backsheet.